



Established
By Edward
Sawyer
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Crimpsville Comments

Chairman: Ernest Taft

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BELLINGHAM FARMS

Bellingham was once known as a farming community. This certainly is not evident now with the land that has been developed for either homes or commercial enterprises.

The first known farm in what is now Bellingham belonged to Edward Rawson. Rawson was born in England in 1615 and along with his wife Rachel moved to Newbury, Mass in 1637.

In Newbury, he was a selectman, judge, and a member of the General Court. After serving as clerk of the General Court, he became Secretary of the Colony in 1650. This required him to live in Boston.

Rawson and his family of twelve children were not solely supported by his salary of eighty pounds, but he was, at various times, granted tracts of land by the General Court. One large tract of this land which was confirmed to him in 1685 became known as Rawson's Farm. It contained about 1840 acres and consisted of about one third of what was to become Bellingham. It included the Caryville section, North Bellingham, and part of Mendon. The other two thirds of the Bellingham area was common land of the town of Dedham.

In 1719, when Bellingham was incorporated, thirteen of the forty families in the area to be known as Bellingham, lived in Rawson's Farm. Pilgrim Village is now located on what was the working part of the farm.

Partridge in his book, *History of the Town of Bellingham Massachusetts*, tells of the early settlers of Bellingham. From his writings, it can be concluded that many were farmers. The following was gleaned from his book:

Richard Blood owned 22 cow common rights. 1

Dr. John Corbet, in his will, left sheep, horses and cattle. It is also stated that he exchanged farms with his brother-in-law in 1749.

John and Cornelius Darling were weavers as well as farmers. In 1707, Cornelius purchased land with twenty-two cow common rights.

Edmund Ingalls purchased land 1716 with twenty cow common rights. In 1720, he purchased more land with eighteen cow common rights.

Nathaniel Jillson, in 1743 deeded his nine cow commons to his sons.

Deacon Thomas Sanford sold to John Marsh, Samuel Rich, and Pelatiah Smith each a share of his farm in 1702. His farm was the quarter share of Rawson's farm that he purchased in 1701)

Ebenezer Thayer purchased fifty two acres with eight cow common rights and two sheep common rights in 1717.

The early beginnings of this country were based on farming. Some of the leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, originally thought that agriculture should be the path that this country should follow and that manufacturing should be left to Europe.

1. cow common rights – the right to pasture animals on common land.

The following quotes indicate Jefferson's feelings toward keeping America as an agricultural country:

"Agriculture...is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals and happiness." - Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 1787.

"The pursuits of agriculture are the surest road to affluence and best preservative of morals" - Thomas Jefferson to John Blair, 1787.

However, Jefferson did change his philosophy eight years after his presidency as indicated in the following quote:

"...we must now place the manufacturer by the side of the agriculturist... Shall we make our own comforts or go without them at the will of a foreign nation?..." - Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Austin, 1816.

Bellingham did have a growth of manufacturing but the biggest area of the town was farm land. Many families kept a cow, a few chickens, and maybe a pig for their own use. Most families also planted a garden for fresh vegetables during the summer and for preserving for winter use.

The farms listed below were no where near the size of the Rawson's farm but they did serve a need of the town and the surrounding areas. They were family farms where the whole family had to work and be involved in order for the farm to prosper. These farms listed all produced and sold a product.

Most of these farms were active in the twentieth century. When profits began to dwindle, many sold their land to developers. The farms started to gradually disappear.

OWNERS	TYPE	LOCATION
<u>Center Street</u>		
Charles Mazdrachi	Dairy	350 Center St.
<u>Hartford Avenue</u>		
Rawlings	Turkeys	Varney's Sand and Gravel
Frank Thomas	Poultry	Hartford Village
Matthew Mooney	Dairy	across from Sunnyside Poultry
Wentzel	Dairy	Opposite south end of Farm St.
Olson	Poultry	
Brown	Vegetable	
Pelataiah Smith	Fruit	
Bullard	Dairy	Opposite North end of Maple St.
Phillip Johnson	Dairy	Pilgrim Village
<u>High Street</u>		
Richard Hill	Dairy	Corner of Maple St.
<u>Hixon Street</u>		
Sciki	Dairy	north end of Hixon St.
<u>Lake Street</u>		
Benjamin Barrows	Dairy	Bellingham Sportsmen's Club
Frank Camelli	Poultry	367 Lake St.
Elmer and George Crooks	Dairy	425 Lake St.
Matthew O'Day	Poultry	460 Lake St.
Will Crooks	Poultry / Vegetables	525 Lake St.
<u>Locust Street</u>		
Eugene Mandeville	Dairy	65 Locust St.

<u>Gingras</u>	Turkey	Bungy Brook Golf Course
<u>Mechanic Street</u>		
Arthur Curtis	Poultry	161 Mechanic Street
Tom Collins	Poultry	187 Mechanic Street
Charles Cross	Dairy	across from Bellingham Golf
Fred Houghton	Vegetables	Colonial Restaurant
<u>Mendon Street</u>		
Carol White	Dairy	Corner of Rose Ave.
S. Gelenian	Poultry	
Earl Thayer	Dairy	East entrance to Bellingham
		Common
L. Francis Thayer	Dairy	Junction of South Main and
	Hay and Grain	Mechanic Street
<u>North Main Street</u>		
Isaac Kaye	Dairy, vegetables	Weathersfield Development
Clarence Kaye	Dairy, orchard	Weathersfield Development
<u>Pulaski Boulevard (formerly Franklin Road)</u>		
Frank Arnold	Dairy	Bellingham Conservation Land
Delphis Gelinas	Dairy	The Firewood Shop
Kuno Betsch	Poultry	1481 Pulaski Boulevard
<u>Railroad Street</u>		
Harold Burr	Cattle	50 Railroad
Howard Burr	Dairy	76 Railroad St.
<u>Scott Street (formerly South Main)</u>		
Steve Scott	Dairy and farm machinery dealer	23 Scott Street
Warren Whiting	Poultry, orchard and vegetables	5 Scott St.
<u>South Main Street (many older folks called this Scott Hill Road)</u>		
Warren Bates	Dairy	Scott Hill Gardens
Rose Boudreau	Poultry	975 South Main St.
Edgar Wade	Dairy	1000 South Main St.
Lionel Boiteau	Poultry	1051 South Main St.
Roger Cournoyer	Dairy	New England Bonsai
Chester Rowse	Dairy	Bellingham Parts Plus
Alec Zhawred	Dairy	Across from Parts Plus
Robert Schafer	Dairy and Cattle Dealer	Schafer Nursery
John Riedle	Dairy	Corner of Fox Run and S. Main
<u>Taunton Street</u>		
George Stearns	Poultry	Taunton St.
<u>Wrentham Road</u>		
Ovide Majeau	Dairy	470 Wrentham Rd.
Orald Fagnant	Turkeys	700 Wrentham Rd.
Viateur Dalpe	Dairy	660 Wrentham Rd.
Emile Cousineau	Dairy	460 Wrentham Rd.

Charles Mazdrachi purchased his farm in the 1920's from L.F. Thayer and operated it until the late 1950's. He kept 24 cows which he at first milked by hand then purchased milking machines in the 1940's. He had a milk route where he peddled raw milk until Massachusetts

passed a law that all milk had to be pasteurized. He then took the milk to Burnside Dairy in Woonsocket to be pasteurized before he peddled it. His black Chevrolet car with a milk bottle on the back was a familiar sight around town.

Information provided by Mary Mazdrachi Gregoire

Frank Thomas's poultry farm went under the name of Sunnyside Poultry Farm.

Richard Hill was the last to operate the farm on High Street. When the land was to be sold, his son moved the cattle and farm machinery to a farm in Maine. Former owners were a Holbrook family and then a Campano family. To the previous generations, the farm was known as the Holbrook place regardless of who owned it. The large lot on the southwest corner of the High Street and Maple Street intersection was known as the "forty acre lot".

Elmer and George Crooks operated a dairy farm until 1968. The farm was then leased until 1978 when the barn burned. Thirty nine head of cattle were lost in the fire. The original barn was built in 1849 and was used until 1947, when a new barn was built. Most of the lumber used to build the new barn was sawed out on the farm since the Crooks family also ran a saw-mill. The main barn tied up forty milking cows and the hay barn added to the cattle barn held ten young stock. Elmer and George were the fourth generation of the Crooks family to own the farm.

Mathew O'Day kept about six hundred hens and peddled his eggs in Boston where he worked. In the 1938 hurricane, the roof blew off his one story hen house. He kept hens until 1949 when he sold the place.

Eugene Mandeville named his farm "Wild Acres Farm". It was formally owned by the Fleurette family. He, at one time, served as animal inspector in Bellingham.

Arthur Curtis usually kept about thirty-five hundred laying hens in two large two story hen coups. He also had several brooder coups heated by coal stoves. The eggs that were hand candled and sorted were sold at the farm with the bulk of the eggs sold wholesale to a dealer who peddled them in Boston. Rhode Island Reds were the hens of choice because they laid brown eggs, and these were the eggs of choice of his customers.

Information provided by Gordon Curtis

Charles Cross worked his farm along with his two brothers who were dwarfs. Part of the foundation of the barn still stands. He pastured his cows on Maple Street where Georgia Pacific now stands. This area was known as Charlie Cross's pasture by previous generations. When it was time for the evening milking, Charlie's two brothers could be seen on a buckboard, pulled by their horse driving the cows up Maple Street to return to the barn. The farm was later sold to Harry Prince of Franklin.

Earl Thayer kept cows in a two story barn that was rebuilt after the original barn, owned by his father L. Francis Thayer, burned on September 15, 1923. The Thayers for many generations had operated the farm. In the early 1950's, Earl and his sons Howard and Donald, in addition to keeping a herd of about thirty milking cows at his Walnut Farm, rented and worked modernized farm machinery. In addition to renting equipment and doing work for other farmers, they plowed snow, dug cellars for home foundations, dug ditches and dug cesspools. At one time, the Thayers had a forty-three foot hay elevator to lift hay to the second story of the barn. It was one of the longest in New England.

Information provided by Jeanne Thayer Kempton

L. Francis Thayer, in addition to the farm ran a hay and grain store supplying material for local farmers. He and his son Ruel, in addition to the feed store, operated a grocery store. They also had teams of horses that were used to do work for anyone who hired them. The house stood where Ben Franklin Bank is now located. The grocery store and post office were in the building now occupied by Town Pizza. Centre Café is where the horse barn was, and the rest of the building was used for the feed store and farm supplies..

Frank Arnold operated a farm on property off Pulaski Boulevard that he leased from Proctor Cook. The entrance is on the left as you go up the last hill on Pulaski Boulevard before Center Street. The land was once owned by Fenner Cook and that hill on Pulaski Boulevard was known as "Fenner Cook Hill".

Kuno Betsch had one two story hen house and two smaller ones, plus several brooder houses on his poultry farm. Eggs that they got from their two thousand hens were sold on an egg route that they maintained, and they also sold eggs at their house. They also sold chickens that they dressed. They operated the farm until the mid 1960's.

Information provided by Stacia Betsch

Steve Scott operated a farm until 1943 when he retired and sold the land that he owned which extended from Scott Hill Road to Center Street. The Green Acres development that is off Center Street was part of his land. The Scotts were on this land for many generations and the land can be traced back to a large tract given to the Scott family in 1649 by Roger Williams. In addition to operating a dairy farm, Steve Scott also was a dealer for International Harvester farm machinery.

Warren Whiting "The Whiting family moved here in 1907, give or take a year or two. My grandfather had one small chicken coop. His son, my father expanded that over the years until, at the World War II period, there were 75 buildings, large and small, housing 15,000 chickens from broilers to 12 lb. capons.

The 5,500 laying hens produced 2,000 dozen eggs per week which we delivered to homes in Bellingham, Blackstone, Woonsocket and North Smithfield. We also sold 150-200 ready to cook chickens that were dressed each week on the farm.

We had 50 apple trees of different varieties along with peaches, 5,000 quarts of strawberries and in the fall, there was a large platform set up on the lawn displaying a ton of winter squash, pumpkins, and bushels of apples. A platform scale weighed the squash and pumpkins that sold for ½ cent per pound."

Submitted by George Whiting

Edgar Wade owned a farm that was once owned by Joseph G. Ray of Franklin. Joseph Ray was the son of E. K. Ray who owned the farm in Franklin that was on the land where Garelick Farms is now located. The Ray family was a very wealthy family that owned several mills and a vast amount of land. It is thought that Joseph Ray imported the first Holstein cattle into this country and housed them on his farm in Bellingham. It was also on his farm that the famous Avery oxen were born. Joseph Ray built the horse track around the pond hoping to race horses there, but he had to abandon the idea when muskrats from the pond burrowed holes in the track endangering the horses. The track was, however, used by local riders for less competitive endeavors. He owned the farm to at least 1919.

Chester Rowse operated the family farm after his father stopped farming. He sold that farm to Ezra Halpin and he moved to the farm located on the former Aldrich place where New England Bonsai is now located. He later sold that farm to Roger Cournoyer. A sad part to the Rouse family farming is when Chester's father and mother ran the farm, his mother was knocked off a load of hay, when the horses bolted and she was killed.

John Riedle bought their farm from the Leone family in 1956 and operated it until about 1970. Horses were kept in a front barn and the herd of about 50 cows in the back barn. Their land extended to Center Street. The house on the property, which later burned, was quite old. It had a beam in the attic in which 1809 was carved. This farm was once owned by Warren Sheldon.

Information provided by Arlene Riedle

Gingras ran a turkey farm on the property that is now Bungy Brook Golf Course. Emile Gareau later bought the farm and along with his sons ran it as a dairy farm. The Gareau family later turned it into a market garden farm. This was then made into the golf course.

We hope that we have included all the farms that at some time operated in Bellingham. If you know of any others, please let us know.

INTERESTING

During World War II, farmers who met certain criteria were excused from the draft because they were necessary to provide food for the country. It seems that those who provided the service to the farmers that would keep them operating could also be excused.

Below is a picture of a garden that was located somewhere in Bellingham in 1935. It was part of The Emergency Relief Program of the F.E.R.A. (Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 1935) established by President Roosevelt. If anyone knows where this garden was located, we would like to hear from you.



A bit of folklore.

Before milk was bottled to sell, it was sold by the quart measure. When the milkman stopped at house, the customer would tell him how many quarts she wanted. He would then fill the quart measure by dipping it into his milk can, and then he would pour the milk into the customer's container.

It seems that a certain Mr. Fisk, who peddled milk for some of the farmers, realized, after getting the milk from the farmers, that he would not have enough for all his customers. As he crossed Peters River on Pulaski Boulevard, he thought that he could add a little water from the brook and then he would have enough milk for his customers.

This worked fine for the first three or four customers, but when he got to the next customer, he filled his quart measure from his milk can. He then poured the milk into her container and noticed a frog swimming in the milk. When questioned about it, he told the lady that a cow must have swallowed the frog when she was drinking from the brook.

M. A. C.

We wish to thank all who have contributed to this article





Mr. Ruel
Thayer

Bellingham
Center views



Mr. Ruel
Thayer and
Trotting horse



June Gaskill
Donald Thayer
Elizabeth Thayer
In the '30's.



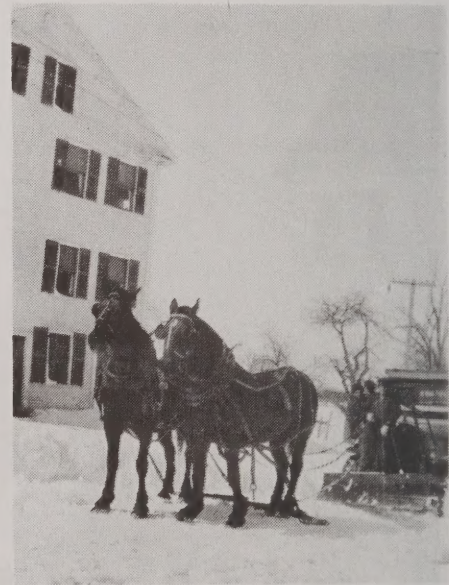
Haying Time 1925
L. F. Thayer barn.

Photos Courtesy Elizabeth Andrews



Deluxe Transportation.
Ladies Aid Picnic 1932
L. F. Thayer
Rev. Clarence Chamberlain

Horses pulling
Snowplow
Winter 1923-24



L. F. Thayer
Ruel Thayer
Earl Thayer
Vincent Thayer
Howard Thayer
1940's



Mrs. Ed Thayer
Elizabeth Whiting
Sadie Gaskill
???????



Ladies Aid Picnic

Marion Thayer
Luvia Cook
Rose Perron
Mabel Holbrook (front)
????????? /

Photos Courtesy Elizabeth Andrews

Rakeville Before The Rakes: The Colt-Darling Controversy

By Stuart C. Mowbray

I was reading the last issue of the "Crimpsville Comments," and very much enjoyed the piece about the origins of the Rakeville neighborhood on Wrentham Road. The author briefly mentioned that Rakeville was earlier known as Mechanicsville. Many readers might not know that this Mechanicsville name was mostly in reference to the Darling family who worked there as blacksmiths and mechanics for generations. The last time that the Mechanicsville name was used on a Bellingham map was in 1858; an original color copy of this map is on display in the Historical Commission museum.

Who were the Darlings and why was this small village named for them? Richard Darling was the first member of the family to own land on the south side of Wrentham Road, purchasing his property in 1727. Richard was a blacksmith, and much of the land he bought, which extended far south into Cumberland, stayed in the family until at least the late 1800s, with each successive generation being blacksmiths or metal workers of some kind. The most famous Darlings were three brothers: Barton, Alvin and Benjamin. It was Barton who put a dam on Bungay Brook and dug a trench that brought the water power to his shop. In that small mill, Barton and Alvin made patented cast-iron water wheels, which were actually primitive turbines. Later, in about 1835, Barton and Benjamin invented and began manufacturing what they called "rotary pistols," which were really primitive pepperbox revolvers. It is this invention that is most intriguing, because their patent included the key features in Samuel Colt's patent, which made Colt rich and famous as the inventor of the revolver. Unfortunately for the Darlings, their patent was granted a mere seven weeks after Colt's, so they received nothing for their ingenuity and were only able to sell about 120 of their pistols to the public.

With the assistance and encouragement of Ernie Taft at the Bellingham Historical Commission, I have written and published a 104 page book on the Darlings and their various inventions, including plenty of information about Rakeville and its history. Entitled "The Darling Pepperbox: The Story of Sam Colt's Forgotten Competitors in Bellingham, Massachusetts and Woonsocket, Rhode Island," it is a professional, softcover book printed on coated paper. It is available for \$19.99 (plus \$3.50 shipping) from Mowbray Publishers, P.O. Box 460, Lincoln, R.I. 02865, 1-800-999-4697.

What I want to talk about here is something mentioned just briefly in the book — the Darling-Colt Controversy. As described in their patent, Darling pepperboxes revolve their cylinder (cluster of six barrels where the bullets and gunpowder went) upon cocking. This was also the single most important part of Sam Colt's famous revolver invention and it has been suggested that the Darlings were the first to make this revolutionary innovation, despite the fact that Colt received his patent almost two months earlier. While Colt became a huge success and is still famous today, the Darling pepperbox pistol never really caught on and the Darling brothers never achieved financial success.

According to Bellingham's official town history, local parents have always passed down to their children the Darling-Colt story. The core of this story or legend is that

Benjamin M. Darling went to see his friend Sam Colt in Boston, seeking funds with which to patent and market his newly invented pepperbox pistol. Colt refused to become involved, but when Darling went to patent his invention he found that Colt had just patented the exact same thing, thereby depriving Darling of his fortune. This story has all of the elements of a classic rural myth: a good-hearted local boy is cheated out of his rightful fortune by a duplicitous city slicker with fancy lawyers.

While I don't think that the myth described above is exactly true, like most myths it has some basis in fact. We do know that Benjamin Darling, in particular, lived a long life in the Bellingham/Woonsocket neighborhood, the last part of which was spent in humiliating poverty. He must have resented Colt's success and doubtless bored all of his acquaintances to death with stories about his "near miss" with fame and riches.

Buying into this, some researchers have agreed with the local legend, suggesting that Colt saw a Darling and then used the idea to have his own patent drawn up, with Colt's papers getting submitted more quickly through sloppiness on the Darlings' part and political connections on Colt's. (Note that later reforms in the patent process made the patenting of such similar inventions less likely.) The Darling patent was issued on April 13, 1836, and the Colt patent on February 25 of the same year. Some sources even suggest that it was the Darlings, not Colt, who sparked the revolution in gun design seen in the mid-19th century.

While it is fun to think otherwise, it is my belief that this often-repeated "chestnut" is mostly nonsense. Yes, it is apparent that the Darlings were actually producing pistols before the issue of their patent, but Colt had early working models, too. For those not familiar with the Colt story, he supposedly came up with his ideas on an ocean voyage in 1830-31. By 1832, he was having models and prototypes made and was corresponding with the U.S. Patent Office, intending to get an actual patent in England first. Colt came from a rich family and had the active support of Henry Ellsworth, Commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office.

The first Colt revolver that actually worked, although unreliably, was a rifle made in 1832. Further samples and prototypes continued to be made, primarily by gunsmith John Pearson, with the invention developing and maturing over the years. The first "production" guns were made in 1836, the same year that his patent was granted.

While we do not know when the Darlings made their first prototypes, we are certain that the pepperbox was a finished, marketable product when it was patented and probably had required a long period of trial and error, just like the Colt. The times needed for the invention and perfection of the two gun designs were probably quite similar and it is accurate to think of them as rivals because they were working on the same idea at the same time, with great rewards going to the winner. However, as should be clear from the above outline, Colt had developed the basic concept for his invention at an early date and it seems highly unlikely that his original inspiration came from seeing a Darling. This is reinforced by the fact that the Darling's mechanism is quite different from a Colt; one questions exactly what Colt supposedly copied other than the general concept of the cylinder rotating as part of the cocking process.

What seems clear, though, is that the Darlings brought their revolving pistol to market first, and certainly had a more perfected product at an earlier date. An early Darling is a much better gun than an early Colt. But Colt's advantages in legal

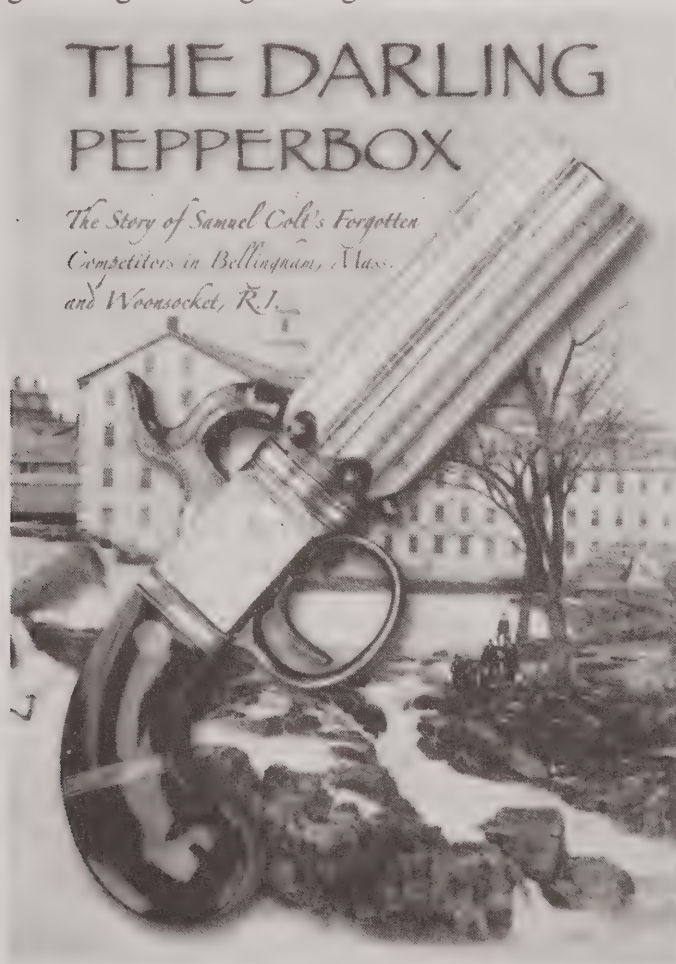
representation and political connections were real, and it seems quite likely that the Darlings started the patent process first, yet finished last.

Aside from “who came first,” it needs to be stressed here that the Colt revolver was a much more promising idea than the Darling pepperbox — despite the many mechanical weaknesses seen in early Colts. Also, Colt himself was a well-connected entrepreneur from a prominent family with powerful and talented friends in the manufacturing and business worlds. The Darlings had none of these advantages. Even if the Darlings had received their patent earlier than Colt, it seems impossible that they ever could have built a gun making empire in Bellingham the way that Colt eventually did in Hartford, Connecticut.

Could the Darlings and Colt have met in Boston or elsewhere, as suggested by the local legend? This is entirely possible, although there is no known record of it. Colt traveled widely and was an active promoter of his new revolving pistol. Perhaps he even attended the Charitable Mechanic Association Exhibition and Fair in Boston where the Darlings successfully exhibited their pepperbox in 1837. This would certainly explain the Boston meeting passed down as part of the local legend.

Colt was not shy about his invention and loved to talk to clever mechanics about it. Despite their differing backgrounds, the Darlings and Colt would have had much to discuss and, who knows, perhaps they even toyed with the idea of a partnership. But the inventions are so physically different, and Colt’s so commercially superior, that it is easy to see why an agreement would not have been reached.

But while we may never know the whole truth behind the Darling-Colt legend, what we can be sure of is that the Darling brothers of Bellingham were men of ingenuity and skill. They grew up on rural Wrentham Road, yet they had ideas and built products that were on the cutting edge for their day. It is time to give credit where credit is due, and list the Darlings amongst Bellingham’s greatest residents.



March 10, 1950

On motion of Zephirin Remillard, duly seconded, it was voted to raise and appropriate the sum of \$4,800.00 for the purpose of purchasing a Forest Fire Truck to replace the 1930 Ford truck now housed in the South Bellingham Community Building; and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to trade in the 1930 Ford truck towards the purchase price of the new truck.



ANOTHER COMPLETED MISSION FOR BELLINGHAM GRANGE

... Fire Chief Peter Kornicki receives one of the 290 hydrant markers presented him by Mrs. Anna Patrick of Bellingham Grange. Work has started installing the indicators throughout the town.

Our thanks go out to the Bellingham Fire Department for the donation of Engine 4 to the Bellingham Historic Commission. Engine 4 is a 1950 International, two wheel drive, standard transmission, forest fire truck. A broken irreplaceable water pump has retired this wonderful truck.



Photo by Ed Guzowski

A Wonderful Pictorial History Book has been written by our Chairman, Ernie Taft. It is available at local stores throughout the town of Bellingham. Inquiries can be directed to Ernest Taft., P.O.Box 477, Bellingham, Ma. 02019. (family pictured on the book cover photo is of the Wentzel Family.



DONATIONS

Josephine Brown
 Janet (Brown) Roach
 Marcelle Enright
 Olga Arnold
 Michael Perry
 Dino & Florence Rotatorio
 Albert Spencer
 (for Dorothy)
 Norman Belcher
 Jeanne Kempton
 (in memory of Bob)
 Jan & Bob Hendrickson
 Sonny Schwenker
 Phyllis (Brown) Rutan
 Andor & Loretta deJony

SO MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED....

It started some time last year (2002), the pieces were put together slowly cause nobody was really in a hurry, after all, none of us had seen each other together since world war II. I hadn't seen or heard from Bill (Bill Bruneau) since leaving High School and Huey (Hugo Meotti) once at the Bellingham Town's historical celebration, were I had the good fortune to dance with Huey's wife Connie. Now Bill he's elected himself the chairman of the group, the pawnmaster, he's putting the pieces together, his pawns, guess who they were? We accepted him since he was the senior one of our group and seemed to be so smart, so you can say he was sort of self elected. Well, any way he saw my name on the banner of the Crimpville Comments and used that as the 1st move to re-unite us. Bill wrote a short letter to the editor of Crimpville passing on a request for me to call a number that he had left. Actually he had gotten his brother to do that and also request a copy of the Crimpville to be forwarded to him. Well anyway I finally got Bill's number and contacted him. I couldn't picture what Bill looked like after all these years but his voice was still the same, and it did bring back to mind what he looked like all those many years ago and many more memories. He informed me that had retired and living in Florida but still very active and healthy, bike riding every morning, nine miles before the heat hits the pavement. Knowing Bill he might be tempted to exaggerate on a few items (9 miles) but at that age it doesn't really matter, does it? He's given up smoking but nine miles....next thing he will be telling me he's into the Iron Man contest. Hell he can tell me anything, I'm just grateful he's not in a wheelchair. He gave me his schedule-when he was returning to New England to visit his aunt, brothers, children and grand-children in Connecticut. It seemed like it was about to happen, our re-union that is. The weather was good in the early part of the summer. Bill touched base with Huey and me to make



Bill Bruneau, Huey Meotti and Dan Weston

sure we were available and going to come. Bill has such a busy life, in fact Bill has always had a busy life and not too uncomplicated either. World War II touched us also, we did our bit and returned home to pick up the pieces and Bill returned to finish High School. I had left before graduation, in fact my folks had to attend and get my diploma cause I was in Honolulu at the time, Huey had did his bit to, we were only too glad to return to normalcy. Bill's return to High School gave him an advantage over the other seniors, a veteran, can you imagine the charm he must have had with the lower classmates, especially the ladies? Thats like letting the fox into the hen house. He selected Marie Wilson, actually I think she did the selecting and she must have straightened him out, no more wild days and nights for that fellow. Now figure this out-he is a senior and Marie a freshman, a sweet country girl who had probably at that time had been no further than Milford. Along comes the world traveler with a lot of stories to tell, a courtship begins. Bill has only a year to finish High School. After she tamed him they got married, He graduated from Hill College moved to Connecticut and ended up working for Pratt & Whitney with whom he stayed untill retiring. Can you imagine our Wild Bill doing so great running a department of 100 people, flying to Florida to check up on Pratt & Whitneys's other site. You have to give Marie a lot of credit and having kids and grandchildren. Its too bad that our sweet Marie has passed on cause she sure had a

huge amount of bragging rights there.. raising four children including Bill , she really must have had her hands full. I know it must have been a tight knit family full love and compassion because Bill and Marie had there roots in Bellingham. A community were you used to be able to leave your doors open and neighbors knew one another from one end of town to the other. Not a large area but big at heart, and it remained that way almost until the fifties. Then with time and progress and with the help of Martin Cerel it started to gradually change. The last town in the county of Norfolk to start changing and enforcing its building codes. Most of us from that era in time and place know that it had to happen but still cherish those days no matter how crude or rough as it may seem today. Huey now there's a quiet one, (didn't use to be that way) I won't say too much about him cause thats the way he wants it. He and Connie had a couple of kids, he's retired and kind of reclusive, still in the house when the got married, Connie says " They will have to drag me from it screaming and kicking before I will leave it". He's sort of mellowed out , thats what life does to you when you've had a good time of it and a couple of jobs which allowed him to grow responsively along with matureing plus making tons of money. Its rumoured that he may have a couple of offshore accounts, just rumours now and you can't blame that on me.

He probably won't deny it unless you ask him directly and then will give you that look as if he doesn't know what your talking about

Well Bill called and it was bad news, we were not going to be able to meet in August as we had hoped and planned, in fact he had to cancel everything at that moment. Evelyn,, Bill's wife had informed him that she was in terrible pain and needed his assistance back home as soon as possible. Well you can't blame Bill being the good hiusband that he is he was leaving at once. I wished him well and hoped that his wife would be getting better soon, and that I would wait for him to phone and let me know what was going to take place in the future. Bill did call after a few days upon returning home and explained to me how involved the problems his wife has and it's something thats not going away and will get more serious as time goes along.

Well time zips along and another edition of Crimpville goes out, the Fall issue and I am starting to make plans to move, it will be the first time for me to move completely out of the Norfolk area, Well, I always felt even being in Upton and Milford that I was still firmly attatched to Bellingham cause the distance apart was very short and the phone number had remained the same for many years. Economics demanded the move, into a condo complex, no more shoveling or maintenance, ah the good life. Well I got an E-Mail from Bill, he's starting to make plans to return to New England and it will be a good time to make plans again for our re-union. He's coming up in November and not returning until the end of December and would I be available again? It was going to be the latter part of November and he would meet me at the "Ole English Fish & Chips" in Woonsocket, he would pick up Huey along the way as he is coming a long way, from Colchester, Connecticut, and he knew were Huey lived and I didn't. The time was eleven in the morning on the 26th of November, which also happened to be both of their birthdays' only being a year apart making Bill the senior member of the group, I'm in between (August). He did say eleven in the morning, its getting late so I called Huey's house, Connie said they had left about twenty minuetes ago. Well I looked out the window and there were a couple of senior's staggering along looking into car windows in the parking lot, sure enough it was them. There was a lot of laughing and wise cracking for the next 10 minutes as the waitresses looked out the windows wanting to know should they call the police or not. Well, Bill decided that we should go to the sports (bar) club down River Street and before we went in I had our pictures taken to commemorate this grand and glorious occasion. It was quiet a birthday celebration lasting from 12:30 till almost 4. We wine and dined, told stories that no one would believe and relived the past and regained our youth in those few short hours. There were no plans for the future for it was now in the past. The years had melted away, we were young again, we were once more the youths of Bellingham.

submitted by Dan Weston

MAILBOX NEWS

Bellingham Historical Commission

Enclosed is a check --a contribution in honor of my sister's 90th birthday.

We both enjoy the Crimpville Comments very much and especially enjoy the old pictures of the town. It brings back many memories of our childhood years.

We are both in fairly good health for 'old folks', with a few aches and pains that accompany the 'Golden Years' and are enjoying our Florida lifestyles.

Thank you again for the wonderful work you are doing--we look forward to each and every issue.

Albert & Ellen Spencer

Dear Sir:

I cannot tell you how enjoyable the Crimpville has been to my wife and me over the years. I met my wife, Florence Bouvier, in 1948 just before our 17th birthday. The Bouviers lived at 140 Pulaski Blvd. in Bellingham. We were married at Assumption Church in April, 1951.

I lived on Salisbury St. in Woonsocket and our driveway was the State-line.

Although Florence and I moved from the area over 50 years ago, we still have fond memories of the town. Enclosed please find a check to assist you in your work.

Sincerely,
Dino & Florence Rotatori

Friendly Corrections???

#162---Ruel Thayer was Postmaster.

Football team picture--Coach was Francis Moriarty(spelling?)
??was Lucien Brunetti...
Picture was taken after 39-0 loss to Hopkinton. We looked it!!!!

Norman Belcher

I so enjoy the Comments and know it must be quite a job to get all the articles together and mailed to all of us. Enclosed is a small donation which might help with postage.

It pleases me so much to see photos and names--recently those of Lenore deJony and Shirley Hunter--not many of the class of '42 left, guess we're getting up there.

I wonder if Eddie Sawyer had any idea what he was starting back in 1973, imagine 30 years ago.

Janet(Brown)Roach

Crimpville Comments,

It has been a long time since I lived in Bellingham, but I still like to hear about it. I so enjoy FMM's articles.

Am enclosing a small donation.

P.S. I can remember sliding at night from above the church over the railroad bridge(now 126). Sometimes on tobogans.

Phyllis Brown Rutan

DEATHS

James J. Potter
Thomas J. Mulry
Frederick L. Powell
Ann Kean
Beatrice R. Dussault
Doris (Aldrich) Coakley
Ovila Lavalley Jr.
Dora L. (Paul) Galle
Eleanor A. (Hewson) Brown
Henry P. Russell
Nishian Karakeian
Joyce A. (Pickering) Curtis
Aileen (Bradley) Smith

Bellingham Historical Commission
3 Common Street
Bellingham, MA 02019

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PAID
BELLINGHAM, MA
PERMIT NO. 15

Before And.....

corner--No.Main St. & Hartford Ave.

BEFORE

1969

residence of Mary Forbes



1998

Ozimek Insurance Co.

AFTER

